

REMARKS

Before turning to the substantive aspects of the Office Action, Applicants would like to take this opportunity to request that the Examiner acknowledge the claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 based on the German priority application DE 103 03 399.8 filed on January 29, 2003, and confirm that the certified copy of the priority document filed on January 27, 2004 has been received.

Turning now to the Office Action, claims 1-28 are pending in this application. The Examiner has issued a species election requirement in this case. The Examiner, finding independent claim 1 to be generic, contends that the claims are readable on two patentably distinct species of the claimed invention -- namely, a first species ("Species I") directed to the embodiments of the present invention as illustrated in Figures 1-9 and 13-17, and a second species ("Species II") directed to the embodiments of the present invention as illustrated in Figures 11-12. The Examiner requires that Applicants elect one of the foregoing Species I and II of the claimed invention for immediate prosecution on the merits to which the claims shall be restricted if no generic claim is finally held to be allowable.

Applicants note that, in the Office Action, the embodiment as illustrated in Figure 10 was not allocated to either Species I or Species II. Applicants undersigned attorney spoke with the Examiner on July 28, 2006 to request clarification. The Examiner indicated that Figure 10 was intended to be included in Species II.

In response to the election requirement, Applicants provisionally elect Species I (i.e., Figures 1-9 and 13-17) and the claims readable thereon for immediate

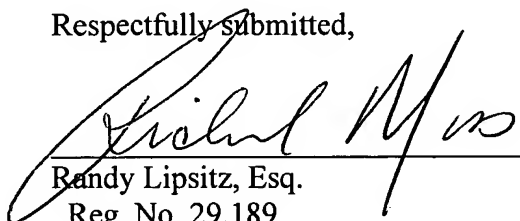
examination. Applicants identify claims 1-8, 10-22 and 24-28 as being readable on the elected Species I. This election is made without traverse and without prejudice.

Early and favorable examination on the merits is earnestly solicited.

The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorneys at the telephone number set forth below if it will advance the prosecution of this case.

No fee is believed due with this Reply. Please charge any fee deficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-0540.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Randy Lipsitz", is written over a horizontal line.

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